

Vilas County Forestry, Recreation, & Land Committee 2016 ANNUAL REPORT



Pink Lady's Slipper – *Cypripedium acaule*– Vilas County Forest

*Prepared by: John P. Gagnon, CF, Forest Administrator
James D. Jefferson, Forest Technician
Dale Mayo, Parks & Recreation Administrator
Don Merton, Parks & Recreation Technician
Jeremiah Oftedahl, Assistant Forest Administrator
Randy Schneider, Recreation Deputy
Con Valkenaar, Administrative Assistant*

2016 ANNUAL REPORT

Vilas County Forestry, Recreation, & Land Department
Mail: 330 Court Street
2112 N. Railroad Street
Eagle River, WI 54521
(715)479-5160
covalk@co.vilas.wi.us

Reporting Period: 1 January 2016 – 31 December 2016

As of 30 June 2016 the Vilas County Forestry, Recreation, & Land Department supervised and managed the following County owned lands:

41,078.62 acres – County Forest (County Forest Law)
61.27 acres – County Forest Special Use (County Forest Law)
41,139.89 acres – Total Acres Entered Into County Forest Law

TIMBER SALES

2016 Sales Sold Value

<u>Species</u>	<u>Tons Sold</u>
Aspen	5,400
White Pine	4,535
Red Pine	5,540
Jack Pine	1,280
Mixed Hardwoods	2,805
Spruce	460
Oak	2,860
Red Maple	205
Tamarack	30
Balsam Fir	<u>715</u>
Total:	23,830

<u>Species</u>	<u>MBF Sold</u>
Red Oak	131
Hard Maple	60
Spruce	5
Red Maple	<u>35</u>
Total	231

In 2016 there were 15 tracts of timber sold, affecting approximately 758 acres. The total estimated value of all sales sold is \$540,962.60.

County Forest 2016 Timber Harvest Schedule and Reconnaissance

Timber Type	Total Acres Scheduled for Harvest Treatment	Total Acres Set-up for Harvest Treatment	Total Acres Deferred or Rescheduled (Explanation)	Total Acres of Reconnaissance
Aspen	251-acres	120-acres	31-acres	545-acres
White Pine	104-acres	135-acres	5-acres	367-acres
Red Pine	330-acres	208-acres	115-acres	369-acres
Jack Pine	39-acres	34-acres	33-acres	396-acres
Balsam Fir	0-acres	0-acres	0-acres	26-acres
White Birch	0-acres	0-acres	0-acres	0-acres
Black Spruce	0-acres	0-acres	12-acres	38-acres
White Spruce	0-acres	0-acres	0-acres	0-acres
Tamarack	0-acres	0-acres	0-acres	26-acres
Oak	112-acres	198-acres	28-acres	340-acres
Northern Hardwoods	137-acres	63-acres	38-acres	349-acres
Hemlock	0-acres	0-acres	0-acres	0-acres
Red Maple	0-acres	0-acres	0-acres	0-acres
Cedar	0-acres	0-acres	0-acres	0-acres
Keg	0-acres	0-acres	0-acres	0-acres
Totals	973-acres	758-acres	262-acres	2456-acres

2016 Sales Closed

<u>Species</u>	<u>Tons Closed</u>
Aspen	10,226
White Pine	2,161
Red Pine	6,911
Spruce	11
Jack Pine	3,928
Mixed Hardwoods	5,433
Basswood	86
Tamarack	70
Balsam Fir	683
Oak	2,604
Maple	487
Total:	32,600

<u>Species</u>	<u>MBF Closed</u>
White Pine	337
Red Pine	213
Mixed Hardwoods	11
Sugar Maple	23
Red Maple	1
Basswood	8
Red Oak	159
Spruce	2
Total:	754

The total value of timber sale contracts closed in 2016 is \$812,694.88. There were fifteen (15) timber sales contracts closed affecting approximately 883 acres. As of 31 December 2016, there were 21 open timber sale contracts on Vilas County lands.

FOREST MANAGEMENT

The Vilas County Forest participates in the County Forest Certification Program as overseen by WDNR. The purpose of the program is to verify through a third party that forest management practices are sustainable, which directly corresponds to sales of forest products and jobs in Wisconsin. The verification is accomplished by an audit of management practices and comparison to the standards of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI). Vilas County Forest has an annual reconnaissance goal of 2,000 acres. Vilas County Forest prioritizes the reconnaissance goal by targeting the oldest data. To remain in compliance with the SFI standards, reconnaissance data must not be more than 20 years old. It is also important to maintain current and relevant information on each stand to assist in the planning process. In 2016 with the aid of the Summer Forestry LTE position filled by Jacob Lueck, completion of field reconnaissance and stand inventory took place on 2,456 acres of forestlands. In addition, editing of 4,509 acres of forest stand data or stand boundary updates occurred in the Wisconsin Forest Inventory &

Reporting System (WisFIRS). The Summer Forestry LTE completed surveying and monitoring of 974 acres of plantations for survival and competition.

No tree planting was done in 2016. In tree planting years, it is very important to note Vilas County receives a 50% discount from the retail price of bare root seedlings from the Wisconsin DNR nursery program.

The Lowther Tree Planter was not requested for use by any private landowners in 2016. The tree planter is available for the planting of fields at \$10.00/acre. Also, as a service to private landowners, the Department stores seedling orders purchased from the Wisconsin DNR nurseries each spring, providing refrigerated storage until seedlings are picked up. A minimum fee of \$5.00 per 1,000 tree seedlings is charged.

Site preparation activities in 2016

Site preparation activities in 2016 included both chemical and mechanical treatments. Anchor chain scarification using the Forestry Department's anchor chain was completed in May 2016 on 51-acres of Jack Pine regeneration and in September and October, an additional 116 acres of White Pine regeneration, for a total of 167 acres for 2016. The total cost of the anchor chain scarification was \$20,421.31 (\$122.28/acre) which includes the County's skidder (DOT Rate), operator wages/benefits, anchor chain, and transportation.



Anchor Chain scarification on jack pine harvest site for natural regeneration

Chemical site prep was conducted in August 2016 on four sites totaling 116 acres. The contract was awarded to Future Forests, Inc. of Askov, MN at a cost of \$11,368.00.



Anchor Chain scarification under Red Pine and White Pine site for natural regeneration

In October 2016, the Wisconsin DNR brush raked 57 canopy gaps on one site encompassing 58 acres of Northern Hardwood forests at a cost of \$583.02. The intention of canopy gap scarification is to prepare the seedbed for natural regeneration of mid-tolerant tree species (Ash, Yellow Birch, Black Cherry, Oak, and Basswood) within Northern Hardwood forests, to move the stand from even-aged to all-aged trees and promote species diversification.

Annual County Forest–WDNR Planning Meeting

The Annual County Forest–WDNR Planning Meeting was held on September 14, 2016. The following is a summary of special concern items resulting from that meeting.

Wisconsin-DNR – County Forest Liaison Jill Nemec reported that DNR Forestry staff were able to meet and exceed the standard for fiscal year 2015-2016, with a total of 951.5 hours (85.5 additional hours or 110%). Some of the additional hours were the result of a June trail project with grant funding that expired at the end of the fiscal year. DNR Forestry Staff expect to meet or exceed time standards again this year. Time Standards were recalculated for WDNR Fiscal Years 2014-2018, resulting in Vilas County Forest receiving 866 work hours per year of WDNR assistance. Jill Nemec mentioned that DNR is willing to provide the County with as

much help as possible, but may not be able to far exceed time standards like in past years because of DNR workload constraints. Wisconsin-DNR Northern Region Team Supervisor, John Gillen elaborated on those constraints, which includes three vacancies on the Oneida/Vilas Team and an increase in Good Neighbor Authority work.

Last fiscal year, the majority of DNR time was spent on timber sale establishment and County Forest administration activities, with a little time spent on recon and infrastructure (dozer) time. County Forests are able to obtain from WDNR equipment time at the rate of \$30.85/hr. for site preparation, timber sales access and infrastructure. County Staff agreed that timber sale establishment will remain a top priority. County Forest staff have a few recreation and forestry dozer projects that they would like for the DNR to accomplish, the DNR reiterated the need for a prioritized list of these projects. The DNR advised that if recreational development continues to increase as expected, the County may have to explore contracting some of their dozer projects. All DNR dozer time will counts toward the county time standards, the DNR has allotted 24 hours for infrastructure in the time standard.

No amendments to the 15-Year Plan were proposed in 2016. The group discussed trail and campground developments and the need to include major developments (like the Torch Lake Campground) in the 15-Year Plan.

FOREST BOUNDARIES

There are approximately 252 miles of County Forest boundaries with other landowners, of which approximately 215 miles either have now been established by certified survey, or have a line by agreement. In 2016, 1.5 miles of certified surveys were completed on the County Forest, at a cost of \$4,415.00.

The program to establish the boundary of the County Forest began in the early 1980's. The boundary lines, corners, and witnesses represent a major investment by the County and are vital to the management of the County Forest. The maintenance of these boundary references is accomplished by refreshing blazes on trees and painting. This work must be accomplished on a rotation of 8-10 years to easily retrace the boundary evidence. In 2016, 39.5 miles of boundary with associated appurtenances received maintenance.

LAND ACTIVITIES

Tax deeds were taken in 2016 on ten (10) parcels, two of which were subsequently redeemed by the former owners. All advertising and administrative costs for real estate transactions are paid from the revenue generated through those transactions.

County Board Resolution No. 98-49 provided for a maximum beginning-of-the-year balance of \$200,000.00 in the Segregated Land Account. The Segregated Land Account was established for the purpose of acquisition of lands to "block in" or consolidate the County Forest ownership, thus avoiding access, harvesting, and other land management issues. County Board Resolution No. 2015-45 was adopted by the County Board on 28 July 2015, and provides that the expenditure of funds from the Segregated Land Account may also be used for recreational facilities development on the Vilas County Forest, and also raised the cap on this Land Account

to \$300,000.00. The FRL Committee within their approved budget must authorize such expenditures. County Board Resolution No. 2016-51 provided that 10% of Timber Sales Revenue be placed into the Segregated Land Account to provide a revenue stream for recreational facilities development.

Revenues:

Account #100.18121 Delinquent Taxes (credited to the General Fund)	\$ 38,698.42
Account #250.50.48322 - Real Estate Sales Revenue	78,092.77
Account #250.50.46810 – 10% Timber Sales Revenue	40,387.35

Expense:

Account #250.50.51560 Rec Facilities Development	29,739.80
Account #250.50.51560 - Routine Real Estate Sale Expense	15,275.93

COUNTY FOREST WITHDRAWALS & ENTRIES

The Vilas County Board submitted one withdrawal of County Forest Land to the Wisconsin-DNR in 2016. The Wisconsin DNR approved the withdrawal of one acre from entry as County Forest pursuant to Section 28.11(11), Wisconsin Statutes, that one acre being a part of N½ NE¼, Section 23, T42N, R9E, Town of Conover, Vilas County Wisconsin. The proposed use of this one acre is for placement of a public safety radio communication tower owned by Vilas County. The Communications Committee established that construction of a public safety radio communication tower capable of accommodating all necessary components of the County's public safety radio communication system to serve the residents and visitors in the Land O Lakes area is necessary. The Communications Committee further recommended this action to the Vilas County Board which adopted Resolution 2015-68 "*2016 Budget and Authorization for 2015 Property Tax Levy*", including funding of \$659,585.00 for construction of the public safety radio communication tower. The Vilas County Forestry, Recreation, & Land Committee determined that this withdrawal will benefit the citizens by securing reliable emergency radio communications for public safety.

At the 4 May 2016 meeting of the Vilas County Forestry, Recreation, and Land Committee, the Committee addressed the Landfill Venture Group's letter dated 16 March 2016 requesting the withdrawal of 71 acres of County Forest Lands. While the Vilas County Forestry, Recreation, & Land Committee did not take any formal action regarding the withdrawal of lands, the Committee does wish to express their support for the expansion project. The Vilas County Forestry, Recreation, & Land Committee has been, and will continue to be actively pursuing land purchases required to replace the lands anticipated to be withdrawn for the landfill expansion project.

COUNTY FOREST ROADS

County Forest Roads are the primary source of access to the Vilas County Forest for management and recreation activities. Due to their importance to the State's economy for the movement of raw materials for the forest products industry & public recreation, qualifying County Forest Roads receive a maintenance distribution from the Department of Transportation.

There are 48.43 miles of County Forest Roads in the Vilas County Forest. The maintenance distribution from the WDOT was \$15,231.34 in 2016, or \$314.50/mile. The 2016 Forestry Department Budget included \$12,400.00 for side brushing and graveling projects.

Gravel is applied each year to portions of roads that do not hold up under use by the public and by trucks hauling wood products. In June 2016, bids for graveling 1 mile of Decker Lake Fire Lane were solicited. Collins Excavating, Grading & Construction, LLC was awarded the bid for \$12,850.00. The 1 mile of graveling was completed in August 2016.



Decker Lake Fire Lane gravel project

In addition to graveling, in May 2016, bids for side brushing 8.41 miles of County Forest Roads were solicited. Northwoods Forestry Co. was awarded the bid for \$4,477.20, and since this was under the budget for this project, Northwoods Forestry Co. contracted with the Department for an additional 3.12 miles at an additional cost of \$1,872.00. The 11.53-mile side brushing project was completed in October 2016 for total cost of \$6,349.20.



Torch Lake Road side brushing project

Expenditures in 2016 for County Forest Road maintenance totaled \$26,422.68. Through an agreement with the County Highway Department, the road system is graded in spring & fall. The cost of grading the 48.43 miles of County Forest Road system two times was \$7,223.48.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Funding for game and non-game habitat improvement and access comes primarily from both the County Conservation budget and grant sources. The primary grant funding sources are the County Forest Wildlife Habitat Grant program which comes from the State Forestry Mill Tax; County Forests receive monies at the rate of 5 cents/acre for lands entered in the County Forest Law §28.11, Wis. Stats. and County Conservation Aid funding (50% cost share). Both are administered by the Wisconsin DNR. In 2016, Vilas County received \$1,937.36 for the County Forest Wildlife Habitat Grant and \$6,000.00 for the County Conservation Aids Grant programs. The \$6,000.00 through the DNR's County Conservation Aids is \$3,450.00 more than the normal grant of \$2,550.00 to Vilas County. The cost share grant is applied to the maintenance of Wildlife Openings and the Hunter/Hiking Trail System. Additional funding sources are through grants from the Ruffed Grouse Society and Turkey Stamp Funds, no assistance was received through these sources in 2016.

The Hunter/Hiking Trail System received mowing on 51 miles of the 104.4-mile system in 2016. The Units maintained were the Langley Lake Unit, Decker Lake Unit, White Squaw Lake Unit, Deep Lake Unit, Pioneer Creek Unit, and the Disabled Hunter Access Area, both the driving and non-driving areas. Nineteen wildlife openings received maintenance in 2016. In addition 1.2 miles of Pioneer Creek Hunter/Hiking trail were renovated in September 2016, including leveling, ditching, grading, and seeding, at a cost of \$750.00.

The wildlife openings are used by a variety of wildlife, ranging from deer to turkeys to ruffed grouse to butterflies. Gated trails lead to the openings, so they are accessible to dispersed recreational opportunities such as hunting and hiking.

The Hunter/Hiking Trail System is on a 3 year maintenance cycle to more efficiently maintain its usefulness for access & wildlife. Over one hundred miles of hunter-hiking trails have been developed and closed to motor vehicle access for hunting, hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and other dispersed non-motorized recreational activities. These roads were initially created as a result of logging roads built by private contractors harvesting timber on the County Forest, beginning in the early 1970's. Over the years these trails were widened and connected using monies from the County Fish and Game Aids, the Habitat Development Fund Grants and Pittman-Robertson Funds, along with County appropriations. Vilas County Forestry Department has been partnering with the Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS) on the development and maintenance of The Hunter/Hiking Trail System and wildlife openings since the mid 1980's. This walking system is gated at key access points to aid in its maintenance. Berms have been used at other points where access is not critical and to eliminate costs associated with gates & their maintenance. The mapping of the System is incorporated as a map layer in the Department's Geographic Information System (GIS). The trail systems are also posted with map boards at access points. Illegal ATV use necessitates the periodic maintenance of the berms. The Wisconsin DNR Eagle River Ranger Station provides the fire equipment dozer as an economical means of maintaining the berms.

FORESTRY PROGRAM - REVENUES AND EXPENSES

Forestry Fund Revenues:

Timber Sales (County Forest Law-46810) Gross:	\$602,436.64	
Less 10% Severance Tax Payment to Towns:	(59,957.79)	
(10% CFL Sales-24460)		
Less 10% Revenues to Segregated Land Fund:	<u>(40,387.35)</u>	
Net Timber Sale Revenues:		502,091.50
(Budgeted Revenues - \$370,000)		
 Camping Permits (46821.001)	 75.59	
Christmas Trees & Boughs (46821.002)	250.42	
Tree Delivery (46821.003)	0.00	
Access Permits (46821.004)	350.00	
Leases (46821.005)	1,001.00	
County Forest Maps (46821.007)	87.37	
Photocopies (46821.008)	3.77	
Air Photos (46821.009)	9.45	
Miscellaneous (46821.012)	<u>2,350.16</u>	
Sub-Total:		<u>4,127.76</u>
Total Forestry Fund Revenues:		\$506,219.26

<u>Forestry Fund Expenses - Annual Budget: (56103)</u>		\$270,392.00
.110 County Forest Administrator (75%)	\$ 44,468.05	
.112 Assistant Forest Administrator (96%)	41,451.94	
.136 Forest Technician (60%)	24,948.67	
.122 Administrative Secretary (70%)	24,514.11	
.131 Extra Help	6,534.00	
.164 Allocated Wages	(30,793.02)	
.750 WRS, FICA, INS, WC, IC, Overtime	69,345.34	
.221 Telephone	724.20	
.222 Electric & Water Forestry, Rec, Land HQ	4,184.16	
.223 Natural Gas Forestry, Rec, Land HQ	651.07	
.239 Refuse Removal	348.99	
.253 Mats & Mop Forestry, Rec, Land HQ	678.00	
.296 Timber Stand Improvement	27,756.57	
.297 Surveys & Lines	4,775.61	
.302 Equipment Purchase & Maintenance	9,132.69	
.310 Supplies	3,640.50	
.311 Postage	394.72	
.312 Photocopier Lease/Supplies	621.85	
.320 Dues & Meetings	4,144.24	
.323 Publishing Fees	800.00	
.330 Meetings/Continuing Education	1,033.56	
.389 Maintenance & Repair FRL HQ	1,731.00	
.799 County Forest Roads	12,400.00	
.810 Capital Equipment	<u>2,378.92</u>	
Total Forestry Fund Expenses:	\$255, 865.17	

The Townships containing County Forest Land benefit monetarily from scientific forest management. These Towns receive 10% of stumpage revenues from annual timber sales, a total of \$59,957.79 in 2016. These monies were disbursed in January 2017 per the percentage of the County Forest contained in the Town. Payments to Towns for 2016:

Cloverland – \$11,518.79	Conover - \$35,545.44
Land O'Lakes - \$3,189.45	Lincoln - \$1,384.07
Plum Lake - \$8,243.72	Washington - \$50.24
Phelps - \$26.08	

Townships also receive from the State of Wisconsin 30 cents/acre annually for lands entered into the County Forest Law that lie within the Township.

Conservation Fund & State Aid Forest Rds. Revenues:

County Conservation Aid (43584)	\$ 6,000.00
County Forest Road Aid	<u>15,231.34</u>
Total Revenues:	\$21,231.34

Conservation Fund & State Aid Forest Rds. Expenses - Annual Budget (56104) \$88,966.07

.110 County Forest Administrator (25%)	14,822.64
.112 Assistant Forest Administrator (4%)	1,727.12
.136 Forest Technician (40%)	16,632.45
.122 Administrative Secretary A (10%)	3,501.89
.131 Extra Help	756.00
.164 Allocated Wages	(10,264.33)
.750 WRS, FICA, INS, etc.	20,260.48
.137 Conservation Congress Annual Meeting	1,474.95
.247 Game Trail Maintenance	1,301.00
.302 Equipment & Vehicle Fuel	2,500.00
.310 Supplies	370.66
.312 Photocopier	0.00
.588 Beaver Control	400.00
.599 State Aid Forest Road (56106)	<u>14,022.68</u>
Total Conservation Fund & State Aid Forest Rds. Expenses	\$63,747.19

Wildlife Habitat Fund - Revenues:

Wildlife Habitat Grant (5¢/Acre – 43583)	<u>\$1,936.36</u>
Total Wildlife Habitat Fund Revenues	\$1,936.36

Wildlife Habitat Fund Expenses:

.599 Trail Maintenance	<u>382.52</u>
Wildlife Habitat Grant (5¢/Acre – 56113)	
Total Wildlife Habitat Fund Expenses:	\$382.52

State Forest Aid Fund Revenues:

Forest Administration Grant	<u>\$41,057.35</u>
Total State Forest Aid Fund Revenues	\$41,057.35

State Forest Aid Fund Expenses (56102)

.164 Allocated Wages (Forest Administration Grant)	\$41,057.35
.310 Supplies	643.00
.339 GIS Special Projects	<u>1,500.00</u>
Total State Forest Aid Fund Expenses	\$43,200.35

RECREATION

Routine maintenance was performed on the County's 15 picnic areas, 3 swimming beaches, 1 shooting range, 11 boat landings, 13 improved fishing sites, and 4 campgrounds. There are barrier-free pan fishing piers at Deep Lake, Cook's Lake, Dr. Oldfield Memorial Park (Wisconsin River), Upper Buckatabon Lake, and Muskellunge Lake. Major park facilities were cleaned twice each week, with lower use facilities cleaned once per week.

The continued maintenance of these facilities was made possible in 2016 by the Forestry, Recreation, & Land Committee's continued support. Jamie Harney was hired as a summer LTE to assist Parks and Recreation Technician Don Merten with park maintenance.

Tamarack Springs and the other campgrounds generated \$1,750.00. Donations at the Vilas County Shooting Range in 2016 totaled \$2,214.69 for the year. The donation tubes placed at Eagle Lake, Muskellunge Lake, and Buckatabon Lake Boat Landings generated \$104.76.

PARKS & RECREATION PROGRAM REVENUES

State Grants:

Snowmobile Trail Maintenance (210.46.43571)	363,675.00
Snowmobile Trail Development (210.46.43572)	243,031.25
ATV/UTV Trail Maintenance	3,676.15
ATV/UTV Trail Development	212,835.05
Rec. Boating Facilities	<u>6,063.50</u>
Total:	\$829,280.95

PARKS & RECREATION PROGRAM EXPENDITURES

Parks (100.30.55200)

.110 Department Head Salary	\$32,725.34
.122 Administrative Secretary A (20%)	6,950.18
.135 Seasonal Parks Technician	29,850.63
.750 WRS, FICA, INS, etc.	42,330.00
.221 Telephone	1,406.16
.239 Refuse Removal	628.42
.242 Maintenance & Supplies	8,581.81
.243 Boat Landings	11,142.92
.248 Pan Fishing Piers	679.08
.302 Equipment & Vehicle Fuel	11,148.92
.311 Postage	156.06
.312 Xerox	215.09
.346 Recreational Trail Safety	1,000.00
.810 Capital Equipment	1,196.13
.820 Capital Improvements	<u>16,775.10</u>
Total Parks:	\$164,785.84

SNOWMOBILE PROGRAM

Snowmobile (210.46.55441):

.110 Department Head Salary	\$23,457.92
.750 WRS, FICA, INS, etc.	11,085.14
.228 Trail Signs	2,480.85
.302 Equipment & Fuel	1,293.74
.310 Supplies	578.56
.311 Postage	0.00
.330 Travel & Meetings	382.89
.346 Snowmobile Safety Committee	1,500.00
.405 Trail Maintenance	121,362.50
.406 Supplemental Maintenance	242,350.00
.820 Trail Development	221,412.64
Total Snowmobile Trail Program:	\$625,904.24

ATV PROGRAM

ATV/UTV Trails (100.39.56109)

.302 Equipment & Vehicle Fuel	11,148.92
.330 Travel & Meetings	312.12
.346 Recreational Safety Committee	500.00
.405 Trail Maintenance	8,531.15
.820 Trail Development	21,250.90
Total ATV/UTV Trail Program:	\$41,743.09

SNOWMOBILE TRAIL PROGRAM

The fiscal year for the program was 1 July 2015 through 30 June 2016. Vilas County contracted the maintenance for 484.7 miles of State funded snowmobile trails, which provide north-south and east-west corridors connecting population centers and related services throughout the County. Funding for maintenance and development of trails is available from snowmobile registration fees, motor fuel taxes, and trail use permits. The Department of Natural Resources administers the program statewide, and mandates that participating counties are responsible for the maintenance and safety of the state funded snowmobile trails within their respective counties. This is facilitated by annual contracts between Vilas County and the Department of Natural Resources. Vilas County subsequently contracts those miles with the eleven snowmobile clubs that are the framework of the Vilas County Snowmobile Alliance, which agree to maintain safe and usable trails. Vilas County inspects the State funded snowmobile trail system at least twice during the snowmobile season to verify contract compliance with grooming, signing, and reasonable attempts to ensure public safety.

The State annual snowmobile trail maintenance contract guarantees Vilas County up to \$250.00/mile for the maintenance associated with the State funded snowmobile trails. Club maintenance expenses beyond the \$250/mile and up to \$750/mile are eligible for reimbursement

through the Supplemental Program. The Department documents club expenditures and forwards those records to the DNR for audit.

Vilas County was one of the few counties that experienced a winter of plentiful snowfall from late December through March. This resulted in total snowmobile trail maintenance costs for the 11 snowmobile clubs in 2015-2016 reaching \$377,123.96, or \$778.06/mile. Due to the lack of significant snowfall throughout the state and very few counties being eligible for supplemental payments, there were sufficient funds available to reimburse counties the full request of expenditures up to the maximum of \$750/mile. Vilas County received 100% of the maximum allowable supplemental reimbursement and a disbursement of funds paid to the 11 Vilas County snowmobile clubs as follows:

Club	Funded Miles	Costs Submitted	Cost Per Mile	Total Payments
Arbor Vitae	52.1	\$41,056.26	\$788.03	\$41,056.35
Boulder Junction	64.0	\$53,784.72	\$840.39	\$51,412.24
Conover	48.7	\$29,952.07	\$615.03	\$29,952.07
Eagle River	58.1	\$46,363.16	\$797.99	\$46,363.16
Lac du Flambeau	18.7	\$8,326.00	\$445.24	\$8,326.00
Land O'Lakes	36.1	\$26,749.00	\$740.97	\$26,749.00
Manitowish Waters	22.2	\$13,363.90	\$601.98	\$13,363.90
Phelps	36.4	\$27,090.69	\$744.25	\$27,090.69
Presque Isle-Winchester	42.4	\$43,132.02	\$1,017.26	\$34,060.26
Sayner	66.5	\$55,298.94	\$831.56	\$53,420.40
St. Germain	39.5	\$32,007.20	\$810.31	\$31,730.93
Totals	484.7	\$377,123.96		\$363,525.00

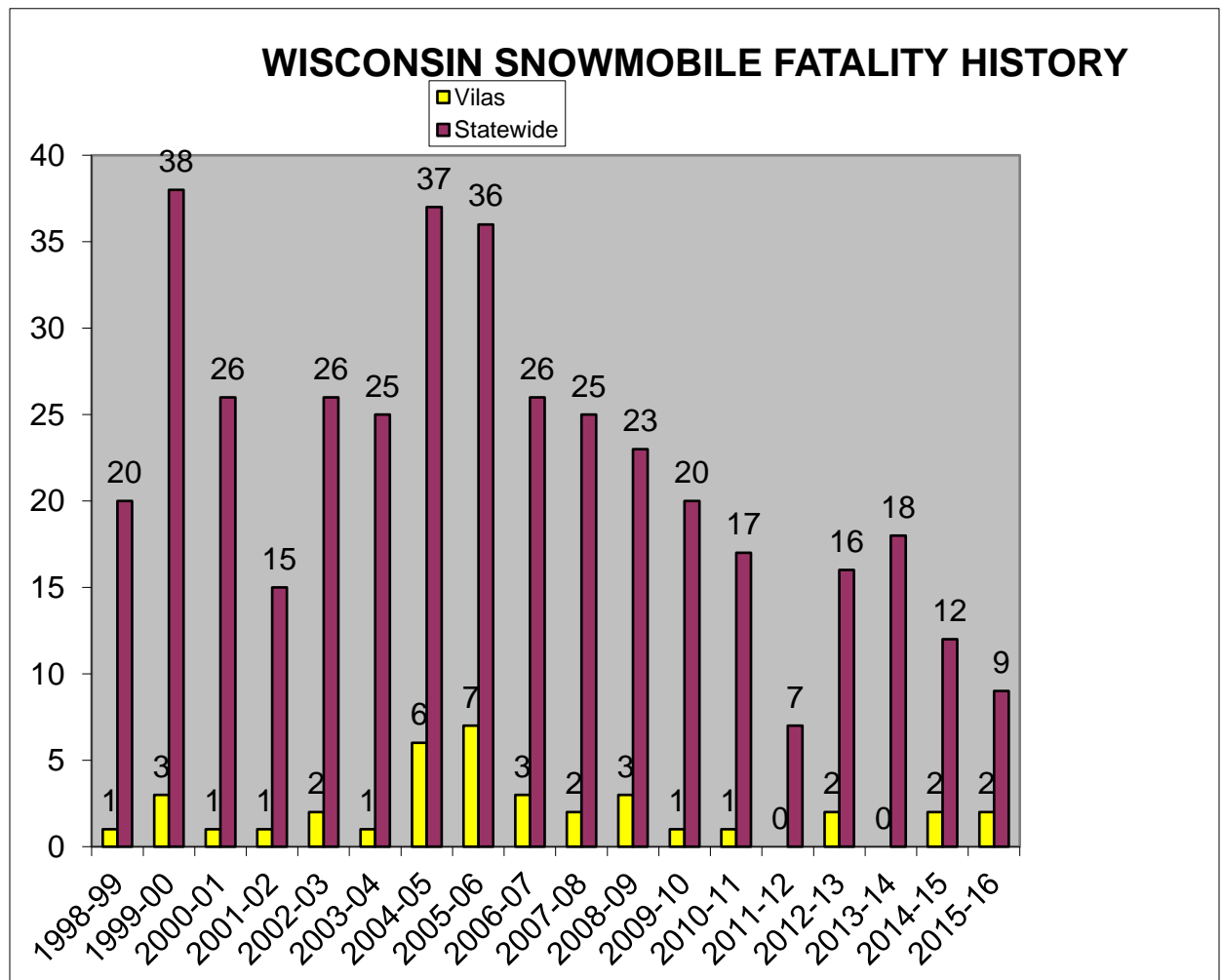
The balance of expenditures not reimbursed by the State and costs associated with maintaining non-funded trails comes from donations from area businesses and fund raising efforts by each club.

The Vilas County Snowmobile Trail Program remains an essential part of Vilas County's economy, and is vital to the winter recreation and tourism industry in this area. Concerns regarding the pending loss of land use agreements with private landowners continue to result in trail relocations. The Department is working with area clubs, state, and federal government in an attempt to resolve these issues. When relocations become a necessity, the trend is to focus on public land use. This, combined with ever-growing demands for additional recreational trails within Vilas County, supports the importance of pursuing multi-use recreational trails in the future.

Vilas County currently has 42 recreational bridges on the State funded snowmobile trails. The bridges are constructed and maintained through snowmobile user fees. These bridges are owned, inspected, and insured by Vilas County.

RECREATIONAL TRAILS SAFETY COMMITTEE

Historically in years of plentiful snowfall, snowmobile fatalities in Wisconsin were on the rise. After back-to-back years of record deaths in 2004-06, legislation was introduced and a 55 mph night-time speed limit for snowmobiles was enacted. During the 2007-08 season, Vilas County had two fatalities, one being a high-profile accident resulting in the death of a television news anchor from the Chicago area. His unfortunate death generated negative publicity for Vilas County relative to drinking and snowmobiling. In 2008-09, Vilas County experienced one fatal accident involving two snowmobiles that regrettably resulted in the death of three individuals.



The Vilas County Snowmobile Trail Safety Committee was established in 2009 to assume proactive efforts regarding snowmobile accident reduction. Vilas County achieved zero fatalities in two of the last five years. The positive efforts from this committee resulted in the County expanding this committee into the Recreational Trails Safety Committee to include other recreational user groups.



The Recreational Trails Safety Committee is comprised of three County Board Supervisors: Kim Simac (Chair), Dan Swiechowski (Vice Chair), & Holly Tomlanovich. Other members are Parks & Recreation Administrator Dale Mayo, law enforcement representatives VC Sheriff's Deputy Randy Schneider and DNR Warden Tim Price, Public Health Director Gina Egan, Tourism & Publicity Director Cindy Burzinski, Vilas County Snowmobile Alliance representatives Dennis Horan & Jen Beda, ATV/UTV Trail representatives Roger Flaherty & Mike Musiedlak, and Bicycle Trail representatives Jeff Currie & Barb Freudigmann. The Committee continues to be proactive and advertise for safe recreational trails.



The Recreational Trails Safety Committee had a 2016 budget of \$3,000.00 and utilized it to display snowmobile trail safety spots on WJFW Channel 12 in Rhinelander, PSAs on local radio stations, and safety posters to draw attention to the Trail Intersection Numbering System (TINS) and riding sober. The assistance received from Vilas County Advertising and Public Health continues to be invaluable in these efforts to promote safe riding. The Committee worked with the Vilas County Sheriff's Department to collect data and work to further reduce recreational trails accidents and portray a family recreational destination. The Recreational Trail Safety Committee continues to support the Vilas County Snowmobile Alliance and other recreational trail groups in their efforts to promote safe and responsible recreation, safer trails and positive public relations about all Vilas County recreational trails.

ALL TERRAIN VEHICLES (ATVs)

There continues to be growing interest and support for All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) and Utility Task Vehicle (UTV) routes and trails in Vilas County from communities. Under the direction of the Forestry, Recreation, & Land Committee, the Department continues to work with local communities, the Highway Department and recreational trail groups to determine the feasibility of future ATV/UTV routes and trails in the County. Additional trails and routes were approved and opened in 2016. Vilas County now has a preferred ATV/UTV system of over 100 miles connecting Forest County, the towns of Phelps, Lincoln, Washington, Cloverland, Conover, Land O'Lakes, St. Germain and the City of Eagle River. Two local ATV clubs maintain this system.



BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN TRAIL PROGRAM

The Department continues to work with surrounding communities to develop the County-owned abandoned railroad grade between the Towns of Conover and Phelps into a multi-use trail. The Town of Conover in cooperation with the Great Headwaters Trails and the County

snowmobile program completed GHT-1 a 3.5-mile segment between the Conover Town park and Muskrat Creek Road . The Department is currently working jointly with the Town of Phelps, Great Headwaters Trails and the local snowmobile clubs to develop the 5.5 mile balance of the County-owned abandoned grade from Muskrat Creek Road going east to Songhill Road and extending the western end of the trail into the Conover downtown area.

TORCH LAKE CAMPGROUND AND RV PARK

The Department was able to obtain \$318,700 in Recreational grants to assist with the construction of Phase 1 of the Torch Lake Campground and RV Park. Construction began with the clearing and grubbing in the fall of 2016. Phase 1 is scheduled for completion 30 June 2017 having 21 sites with water and electric hookup. Musson Brothers of Rhinelander was the successful bidder on this project. Continued support from the Vilas County Board of Supervisors is allowing this recreational facility to become a reality.

OTHER TRAILS

There continues to be growing interest in equestrian trails. Vilas County developed an equestrian campground and opened eleven miles of equestrian trails in 2016.



Motorcycle interest is also on the rise. Dual sport motorcycles have been visiting this area for years stimulating the economy. These endurance style motorcycles are street legal. They are able to utilize any roads and trails open to vehicle traffic. Legislation passed in 2016 will allow these licensed vehicles to be able to purchase registrations. This would allow these

motorcycles to utilize a county's ATV trail system, providing a county supports this usage and passes local ordinances.



There are more and more demands placed on local trail systems by all these user groups. The need for multi-use trails is becoming more evident as the Committee continues to try to accommodate recreational trail groups. To move forward, the Committee plans to work with the trail groups and Northcentral Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission to develop a comprehensive countywide recreational trails plan.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Vilas County Forestry Law Enforcement Report For 2016

The Vilas County Sheriff's Department currently has one Deputy Sheriff assigned to recreational patrol duties within Vilas County's 1,018 square miles (857 are land, and the other 161 are water).

Vilas County has just over 700 miles of groomed snowmobile trails. During the 2016 snowmobile season (End of Dec 2015 through March 2016), the Vilas County Sheriff's Department put in 246 hours of patrol, accident investigation, and record keeping associated with the snowmobile season. The Department had 29 snowmobile-related complaints (operating on roadways, trespass, etc.), 27 reported snowmobile accidents, and 2 fatalities. There were 17 citations and 29 written warnings issued by the Department. Recreation Officer Deputy Randy Schneider along with Deputy Tyler Pontbriand assisted the St. Germain Bo Boen Snowmobile

Club with putting on a snowmobile safety class in December of 2016, which graduated 82 participants.

The Vilas County ATV/UTV fiscal year for patrol runs from 1 May through 30 April. From 1 May through 31 Dec 2016, the Vilas County Sheriff's Department had 139 hours of patrol, accident investigation, and record keeping associated with the ATV/UTV season. The Sheriff's Department had 48 ATV/UTV related complaints on file, and 5 reported accidents. 4 of the accidents were on private property, and one accident was on an ATV/UTV route. There were 10 citations issued and 15 written warnings in relation to illegal ATV/UTV operation.

During the open water months of 2016, the Vilas County Sheriff's Department put in 203.1 hours associated with water/boat patrol duties on the waters of Vilas County. Vilas County Sheriff's Department had 10 reported boating related injury accidents and 7 other boating complaints. There were 6 citations issued and 18 written warnings.

In the Months of May, June, July and August 2016, 27.15 hrs. were expended patrolling the National Forest Campgrounds including Anvil Lake, Kentuck Lake, Spectacle Lake, and Lac View Desert Lake Campgrounds. This was done with the assistance of a \$1,500.00 grant through the U.S. Forest Service.

There were 14 complaints filed and investigated by the Vilas County Sheriff's Department associated with Vilas County Forestry property. These complaints consisted of littering, illegal dumping, trespass to property, and illegal ATV activity on County property. There was one illegal deer stand seized from County property. Several illegal deer baiting issues on County Forest were investigated and turned over to the Conservation Warden.

SUPPLEMENTAL

The Department staff, under the direction of the Committee, continued Vilas County's involvement with the Wisconsin County Forests Association (WCFA), Society of American Foresters (SAF), Trees for Tomorrow, Wisconsin DNR, Wisconsin Headwaters Invasives Partnership (WHIP), and other County Departments to support sustainable forest management and the wise use of our natural resources.

The Committee introduced 17 resolutions to the County Board, which were subsequently passed. Notable subjects were: Entry & Withdrawal of CFL Lands; Authorize 2016 Real Estate Sales; Amending County Outdoor Recreation Plan; County Conservation Aids, Conover Recreational Trail Land Acquisition; Commemorate 100 Years of the Vilas County Fair, Transfer 10% of Timber Sales Revenue to Land Account, Transfer \$30K from Land Account for Equestrian Campground Outhouse, Utility Easements across County Forest Lands, County Torch Lake Campground Project Expenditures; Annual Forest Administration Grant & Work Plan.

Vilas County annually receives 866 work hours per year of Wisconsin-DNR assistance. The hours are negotiated every four years and are set by administrative rule. The County receives technical and scientific advice and assistance on timber sale establishment, timber sale administration, reconnaissance, and regeneration along with other assistance including insect and disease management,

wildlife management, and infrastructure. The Wisconsin DNR Forestry staff were able to meet and exceed the standard for fiscal year 2015-2016, with a total of 951.5 hours (85.5 additional hours or 110%). Some of the additional hours were the result of a June trail project with grant funding that expired at the end of the fiscal year. Sincere appreciation goes to the staff of the Eagle River Ranger Station, Vilas County Liaison Forester Jill Nemec, Ranger Jamie Remme, and Forestry Technician Ryan Brown.

Assistance is given to other County Departments throughout the year. The Department Foresters remain involved with the Land and Water Conservation Department in working on the problem of invasive plants. The Foresters continued participation on the Steering Committee of the Wisconsin Headwaters Invasives Partnership (WHIP). WHIP continues its relationship with Lumberjack Resource Conservation and Development Council, Inc., receiving continued sponsorship and financial assistance.

The Sky Barons Radio-Controlled Aircraft Flying Club continues to maintain for the public the flying field and shelter in Conover.

A land use permit was again granted to the Northwoods Blizzard Blast Committee for the use of County Land in the Town of Conover. This is an annual event drawing many participants and spectators to the town each winter.

Storage Building



In August 2016 the Forestry, Recreation and Land Department moved equipment into the newly constructed storage building. The old storage building was razed in November 2015 by Collins Excavating, Grading & Construction, LLC for a cost of \$2,800.00. The old pole building and tree cooler were in need of major structural repairs with a leaking roof, rotting poles and purloins. The concrete for the building was poured in May 2016 with completion of the structure by Cleary in July 2016. Total cost of the project was \$106,174.45. The new structure is 40 ft. wide by 60 ft. long and will serve the Forestry, Recreation, & Land Department with ample storage into the future.

ANNUAL TIMBER SALE REVENUES OF CO. FOREST LANDS & RESERVE LANDS

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>TIMBER SALE REV.</u>
1997	\$1,407,489.48
1998	\$209,112.18
1999	\$559,532.13
2000	\$553,332.26
2001	\$304,513.71
2002	\$368,664.02
2003	\$255,685.30
2004	\$319,720.84
2005	\$380,035.30
2006	\$605,860.44
2007	\$463,092.90
2008	\$602,801.58
2009	\$297,910.49
2010	\$315,763.15
2011	\$346,309.39
2012	\$396,915.35
2013	\$543,285.43
2014	\$336,690.33
2015	\$655,269.47
2016	\$602,436.51

Presented to the Vilas County Board of Supervisors by:

VILAS COUNTY FORESTRY, RECREATION, & LAND COMMITTEE

Steve Doyen, Chair

Art Kunde, Vice Chair

Willy Otterpohl

Jay Verhulst

Todd Achterberg